

SEWAGE UPDATE 29nd May 2021

Since 29 April we have had **five** successive sewage breakouts on the main sewage line between the Maidstone Rd Pumping Station and its eventual route past Whatcote Cottages and Askew Bridge to Wrotham Heath. These breakouts have all happened in a garden of a house on Sandy Ridge, and there is a major Southern Water operation taking place there. The proposed solution that we have been advised of today is that a 25 metre sleeve will be inserted in the damaged pipe to ensure sewage cannot escape again. Works there have now been completed, and reinstatement and landscaping have begun.

The sewage has been overflowing into the Network Rail culvert that runs west alongside the railway line as far as Griggs Way, and thence through the Recreation Ground stream, heading through Woodlands Estate towards Basted Mill pond. So far judicious damming of the route has prevented a major flow into the river system. The Environment Agency have been kept informed and are monitoring progress closely.

The Maidstone Pumping Station has had to be shut down to allow work on the damaged pipe, and this has necessitated a huge fleet of sewage tankers bypassing the pipe running sewage from Maidstone Rd, Basted and Ightham.

We have to acknowledge the huge effort put in by Southern Water and its contractors, and the exemplary way they have handled the operation, but our main thanks should go to Andy Morris the SW Engineer in charge of the operation, who has been outstanding in his liaison with the residents and Parish Council.

BUT.....Harry Rayner and I am in contact with senior management at Southern Water to keep pressing for a long term resolution. We believe it is largely the astronomical cost of the tanker operation that will persuade Southern Water to seek that solution. The main sewage pipe out of Maidstone Rd was installed in 1929, and is past its best - it simply cannot cope with the increased pressure needed to manage the huge increase in sewage demand as more and more houses are built.

The one good bit of news about all this is that the recent upgrades to the Maidstone Rd Pumps seem to have worked, in that the increase of pressure with them working properly is what may have caused, if not the actual burst, the escape of sewage through existing cracks. That means that once the current issue is resolved, we should not see a return of the multiple sewage outbursts we have suffered over the years throughout the village.

Mike Taylor 29 May 2021

Recreation Ground Stream



Sandy Ridge Site



First Sandy Ridge Excavation



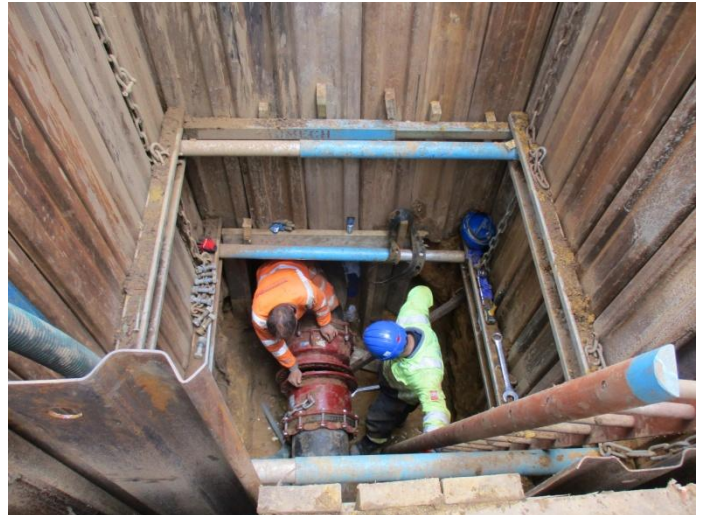
Tanker arriving at Maidstone Rd



Site of third sewage breakout



Third and fourth beakouts



Second Excavation extended for pipe insertion



Standby tankers keeping excavations clear



Reinstatement underway

